

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**EEB(F)072**

**(Question Serial No. 0782)**

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (4) Public Education and Community Involvement

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Ms Irene YOUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

Regarding the promotion of green burial, please set out the details of the promotion work in the past 3 years (2021, 2022 and 2023), including the staffing and expenditure involved. Please also provide the figures of green burial cases in the past 3 years. Has the Government assessed the effectiveness of the promotion and implementation work? If yes, what are the outcomes? If no, what is/are the reason(s)?

Asked by: Hon CHEUNG Yu-yan, Tommy (LegCo internal reference no.: 16)

Reply:

In the past 3 years, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department promoted green burial through different channels, including broadcasting Announcements in the Public Interest on television, radio and online platforms, producing promotional videos, displaying posters and banners, launching a thematic website and a mobile app, collaborating with non-governmental organisations and carrying out promotional activities at exhibitions for seniors. As a standing arrangement, the Health Education Exhibition and Resource Centre of the Department located in the Kowloon Park in Tsim Sha Tsui provided an exhibition area with multi-media display equipment for promotion of green burial. To enhance public awareness of green burial, the Department regularly organised guided tours for the public and organisations to visit its Gardens of Remembrance (GoRs) for a better understanding of the relevant facilities and services.

Since 17 October 2023, the Department has strengthened publicity and unveiled a series of promotional activities with the theme of "Green Burial - Love Living On". A highlighted project was a new commemorative facility for green burial in Tsang Tsui GoR in Tuen Mun. An artwork built with recycled wood in an image of a Chinese boat was erected and memorial post boxes were provided to facilitate families to express their feelings through writing letters.

The Department launched a design thinking consultancy study in mid-2022. The aim of the study is to gain a better understanding of the needs of users and the views of stakeholders and the general public, so as to formulate more effective strategies and measures for the promotion of public understanding and acceptance of green burial, enhance the green burial services

provided by the Government and encourage more people to use the services. The consultant invited relevant stakeholders, including members of the public, representatives from the funeral trade, academics, operators of private cemeteries and representatives from non-governmental organisations, to participate in workshops and face-to-face interviews, in order to gain a thorough understanding of their views. A consultancy report has been preliminarily completed. The Department will carefully study the recommendations in the report and their feasibility, so as to draw up suitable measures to encourage more members of the public to opt for green burial.

In the past 3 years, green burial promotion was coordinated by a dedicated team comprising 6, 5 and 6 full-time staff in the respective financial years of 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24. The expenditure on promoting green burial in these years were about \$13 million, \$13 million and \$19 million respectively.

The numbers of green burial cases in the past 3 years are provided as follows:

Year	Number of cases	Scattering of ashes		
		In GoRs*	At sea	Total
2021	7 112	906	8 018	
2022	8 437	1 012	9 449	
2023	8 237	1 144	9 381	

\*Including cases handled by private cemeteries.

The Department has been reviewing the effectiveness of its promotion of green burial through on-going monitoring and analysis of the relevant statistics, including the data of people opting for green burial, the utilisation of green burial facilities and the number of registrations in the Green Burial Central Register. To understand the public views on green burial, two questionnaire surveys were conducted in 2020. In one of the surveys, users of cremation service in the past few years were asked how they handled the ashes of the deceased. In the other survey, public views on green burial were sought. Based on the views collected, the Department has adjusted and enhanced the promotion work of green burial.

With the active promotion of the Government, the popularity of green burial has significantly increased in recent years. The number of green burial cases increased more than two-fold from 3 400 in 2013 (accounting for 7.8% of the total number of deaths in the year) to around 9 380 in 2023 (accounting for 16.5% of the total number of deaths in the year). As it still takes time to bring about the change of social norms and conventions, the Government will continue, through providing and enhancing green burial facilities and services, public education and publicity, to gradually make green burial the mainstream arrangement of handling ashes, so as to achieve the policy objectives of being more environmental friendly and sustainable development.

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